

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

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The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought with it the end of Turkey's traditional security role of defender of NATO's southern flank. To redefine the Turkish-US security relationship, President Bill Clinton announced in 1999 that the US and Turkey had a "strategic partnership." The hollowness of that pronouncement became apparent on 01 March 2003 when the Turkish Parliament decided to deny the US military access to Iraq from Turkish territory. That decision has thrown into question the nature, as well as the importance, of the US-Turkish strategic partnership.

This paper explains the post Cold War internal and regional changes affecting Turkey's current and future security decision making. The paper also argues that Turkey will remain central to U.S. security goals in the Middle East. This is primarily due to the NATO initiatives Turkey has adopted and Ankara's economic and security influence in its region. Finally, the paper recommends that an enduring strategic partnership with Turkey be built upon effectively addressing Turkey's number one security concern, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) safe areas in northern Iraq.

DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH TURKEY

In the sixteen years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the United States (U.S.)-Turkish security relationship has undergone much review and produced some significant successes in the Balkans, Afghanistan and the Caucasus, but it has not coalesced into an agreed upon framework for an enduring future. The relationship is strengthened by shared interests, like in Afghanistan, but it is also marked by a pervasive mistrust, mostly due to events in Iraq, that will remain until firm steps are taken to demonstrate the value of the post-Soviet relationship. The relationship struggled during the 1990s and early 2000s while Turkey underwent a process of internal democratization in the form of Kurdish civil rights and Islamic resurgence that developed in opposition to Turkish nationalists and secularists. The U.S. bilateral relationship also has to share a stage with the European Union (EU) as Turkey strives to enter that organization at a time when some leaders in the EU want to weaken the trans-Atlantic link and Turkey is seen as a potential confederate of the U.S. Finally, a decade of unrest in Iraq has been an ongoing thorn in the Turkish - U.S. relationship as both sides have tried to press the merits of their different security views towards Baghdad. Some might argue that Turkey's importance to the United States as a security partner in the post Cold War world has diminished. They might cite the U.S. ability to attack Iraq in March 2003, without direct Turkish support, as an example of Turkey's waning importance as a security partner. However, this view would be shortsighted and potentially dangerous to long-term U.S. interests in the region. While Turkey's failure to actively support the U.S. in the opening stages of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) was a disappointment, the Turkish Parliament's decision also focused U.S. attention on how the three regions straddled by Turkey have changed since the end of the Cold War. This deeper understanding of the region's new dynamics is the foundation for creating an enduring security relationship between the U.S. and Turkey. This paper will explain the major internal and regional changes for Turkey since the end of the Cold War. The paper will also focus on why Turkey continues to be central to U.S. security goals in the region. Finally, it will recommend steps that can cement the relationship for years to come.

Post - Cold War Turkey

The internal political and social structure of Turkey has changed in recent years in ways that have increased the amount of political space for emerging Islamic interest groups. This has weakened the Turkish military's traditional role as the guarantor of Turkish secularism. Since the mid-1970s there has been a gradual process of political pluralism occasionally marked by the Turkish military's intervention to return its society to the status quo of secularism and

political stability. Notwithstanding these strong measures by the military, there has been a steady growth of religious identity expressing itself in the political system. In 2002, Recep Tayyip Erdogan secured the Prime Ministership as head of the pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP). His election victory brought together the growing strength of political Islam at a time when the other competing political parties were disorganized and the electorate was tired of many years of corrupt elected officials.¹ This trend in Turkey's development has created a state that is markedly different than the U.S.'s Cold War partner. As these changes are understood, both countries will require a new approach to forging a security relationship.

Years of gradual Islamic growth have changed the Turkish civilian-military landscape. Since 1924 the Turkish government has tried to control Islam rather than eradicate it. This effort has been institutionalized in the government's Directorate of Religious Affairs and Charitable Trusts. This organization controlled the funding of mosques and the schools for the formation of religious leaders. During the 1980s and 1990s, Turkey witnessed the migration of rural, typically Muslim, villagers from the economically depressed eastern provinces to the industrialized western parts of the country. This demographic shift brought increased strength to the Islamic-based political parties located in the major cities of western Turkey. Thus, in 1991, the Welfare Party, an organization explicitly devoted to the expansion of Islamic belief and practice, gained 40 seats in the Grand National Assembly. In 1994 they captured Istanbul and Ankara in the local elections and in 1995 they became the largest party in Turkey.² After being closed down in 1998 by the Constitutional Court, the party reemerged in 2002 under the leadership of Erdogan as the AKP.

Potentially, this development puts Turkey on a political collision course between those who support an overt role for religion in society and those who want religion to remain a personal expression confined to the individual. The secularists in Turkey are a diverse group. They include military officials, left-wing adherents, young adults who are pursuing a western lifestyle and do not want the strictures of Islam, and middle-class Turks who associate public Islam with a form of fanaticism. The traditional entry point into Turkish Government for the US military has been through the Turkish military. The US military must now tread carefully in its relationship with its Turkish counterparts because the Turkish military and the Islamists may use any ups and downs in the U.S.-Turkish military-to-military relationship for their own political purposes.

The European Union (EU) accessions process also influences Turkish civilian-military relations. EU reforms, adopted by the Turkish Parliament on 6 August 2003, significantly

curbed the military's role in politics. Most notably, the military lost its primary role on the Turkish National Security Council and the military's budget became subject to greater civilian oversight.

The drive to make Turkey a more attractive partner to the EU has also led to changes in its minority policies, most notably with its Kurdish population. In March 2004, Kurdish language schools opened in Eastern Turkey. The following June, Kurdish-speaking programs began to appear on national television. Surprisingly, this political development had a secondary effect of weakening the role of the military in Turkish internal politics because the EU accession process focused international attention on any potential disproportionate use of force by Turkish security officials in Eastern Turkey. The EU reforms also softened some of the fire of Kurdish nationalism. This trend was evinced during the March 2004 local elections where several Kurdish candidates in Kurdish-dominated areas lost their seats, primarily to AKP candidates

NATO is the other major multinational organization to influence Turkey's recent decision making. During the Cold War there was a broad, positive consensus within the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with respect to Turkey's strategic importance. Western nations regarded Turkey as a bulwark on NATO's southern flank where it was designed to fight a relatively static, defensive battle to tie down some 24 Soviet divisions that might otherwise find their way to the plains of Europe. Turkish facilities were also useful for the projection of US and NATO power into the Middle East and for verifying arms control agreements with Moscow.³

Turkey's new role in NATO recognizes the country's geographic placement between Europe and the Middle East and its ability to facilitate the Alliance's eastward reach. Turkey's emerging role in NATO was summed up in the final sentence of the 2004 NATO Summit communiqué. It stated that "Here in Istanbul, a city that bridges two continents, we have reaffirmed the vital transatlantic link and extended new offers of cooperation to countries and to regions of strategic importance."⁴ In the 2004 NATO Summit in Istanbul, the Alliance set goals of enhancing the Euro-Atlantic partnership by creating regional liaison offices for the Caucasus and for Central Asia. These offices are located in Georgia and Uzbekistan, respectively. NATO's International Staff has also created two positions in Belgium for representatives from those regions. This NATO initiative substantiates Turkey's own efforts for over a decade to develop relationships in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The Alliance also recognized the role Turkey can play as a regional leader in providing security in the Black Sea area. Additionally, Turkey will contribute to cooperation in the broader Middle East region through the "Istanbul Cooperation Initiative." This initiative, announced on 28 July 2004, was offered by NATO to interested countries in the region, starting with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, to

foster mutually beneficial bilateral relationships where NATO can add value, notably in the defense and security fields.

Turkey's emerging role in an eastward-looking NATO has its own logic. Turkey sees itself in a difficult neighborhood surrounded by states struggling with the post-Soviet problems of changing economics, nationalism, crime, corruption and war. Turkey's approach in this environment has been to fill a regional leadership role in advancing outcomes in line with its own security desires. It has not pulled back from Russia even though the latter has security arrangements with Armenia. On the contrary, Prime Minister Recip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin have looked for ways to increase trade and security in the Black Sea region. Likewise, Turkey and Greece have continued to move forward on Aegean security issues even while the UN-sponsored Annan Peace Plan for Cyprus foundered in 2004 because of Greek Cypriot intransigence. Turkey has been a leader in Black Sea security by forming the six-nation, Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR) in 2001. Turkey also launched a continuous naval force in the Black Sea called Operation Black Sea Harmony and invited other BLACKSEAFOR states to participate as well. Turkey urged Syria to abide by UN Security Council Resolution 1559 and to withdraw its troops and intelligence units from Lebanon.⁵ While the US wanted Turkey to isolate Syria, it appears Turkish officials believe the Syrian government might be moved in a positive direction by engagement, not estrangement. This Turkish policy is an expression of its enmeshed interests with Syria. The resurgence of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) has given Turkey, Syria and Iran a common security concern. This, along with the need to sustain the positive pattern of Turkish economic growth since 1992, is a strong incentive for Turkey to reevaluate its overall relationship with Syria and Iran. Trade with Iran has grown from \$1.2 billion in 2002 to \$2.7 billion two years later. Likewise with Syria, trade volumes increased from \$241 million in 1999 to \$910 million in 2003.⁶ These figures illustrate the growing importance of these countries to Turkey. These figures also show that the Erdogan government is stressing the trade component of its foreign policy. This emphasis became apparent in the June 2005 visit to Washington by Prime Minister Erdogan when the majority of the Prime Minister's delegation were businessmen. The Erdogan government has continued to build its relationship with Russia on economics. On 17 November 2005 the Blue Stream natural gas pipeline from Izobilnoye, Russia to Ankara, Turkey officially opened. Erdogan used the opportunity to showcase his intention to make Turkey an energy corridor between the East and the West.⁷ This aspect of Turkish economic policy is strengthened by the expected first delivery of Azeri oil to the Turkish terminal at Ceyhan in May 2006 and the ongoing discussions to develop a gas pipeline from Baku, Azerbaijan to Erzerum, Turkey.

Turkey has several concerns related to Iraq. In 2003, the Turkish public interpreted Operation IRAQI FREEDOM as an attack against a fellow Muslim state. This was the basis of the 01 March 2003 Parliamentary vote against allowing the U.S. use of Turkey as an entry point into Iraq for the Fourth Infantry Division. Turkish nationalists and security officials fear that Iraq could split into three ethnic communities. This could extend Iranian and Shia extremism in the region. More importantly, it could also result in a Kurdish state on Turkey's border. Potentially, this could increase Kurdish nationalism in Turkey.⁸

Turkish officials are most alarmed by the creation and maintenance of Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) safe areas in northern Iraq and an upswing in PKK-related violence in Turkey. Turkish concerns are justified. In June 2004, the PKK renounced its five-year ceasefire and resumed the use of violence. The renewed unrest, which mostly takes the form of small, armed clashes with Turkish security forces in southeastern Turkey, has been punctuated by bombings of tourist sites in Western Turkey. The level of violence does not compare with the killings that took place during the 1980s and 1990s that caused more than thirty thousand Turkish deaths.⁹ The international environment, however, is different now. PKK attacks, especially in western Turkey, are now seen through the lens of terrorism. The State Department put Kongra Gel, a renamed PKK, on its Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list on 01 May 2003. Subsequently, President Bush discussed with Prime Minister Erdogan the need to take concrete steps against the PKK in Iraq.¹⁰ Turkish officials claim that, in fact, the PKK has been able to reconstitute itself because of sanctuaries it maintains in northern Iraq.¹¹ Reportedly, between June 2004 and January 2005 the PKK deployed an estimated 1200 militants from northern Iraq across the mountainous border with Turkey. Turkish security officials claim that the PKK has an estimated 4000 operatives in northern Iraq.¹²

One may not have confidence in Turkish figures, but two trends are clearly evident in the last 18 months. PKK-conducted violence in Turkey is on the rise. A review of press reporting will not give an exact number of PKK-led attacks but it does give a reliable indication of the upward trend lines. What is also apparent is the Turkish public is becoming polarized and radicalized by the violence. On 23 August 2005 near Trabzon, a mob attempted to hang PKK members being pursued by security forces.¹³ On 9 November 2005 in Semsinli, a hand grenade exploded at a bookstore belonging to an ex-activist of the PKK. In the same town, pro-Kurdish sympathizers protested against the bookstore attack. Additionally, a group of PKK sympathizers, about a thousand people, attacked a police checkpoint which resulted in the deaths of two people and injuries to fourteen.¹⁴ In response to the rising violence, the Turkish

prime minister visited the troubled region on 18 November 2005 to urge calm and pledged a full investigation into the grenade attack.¹⁵

Secondly, increased PKK activity is raising tension in the U.S.-Turkish relationship. Turkish officials are making clear that equivocal U.S. responses to the PKK safe areas in northern Iraq are fueling anti-US feelings by the Turkish populace.¹⁶ The public mood is having implications for U.S. security objectives in the region. Efforts in late 2004/early 2005 to get Turkish permission to use Incirlik Air Base as a logistics cargo hub for operations in Iraq were held up for months by the Turkish government. Turkish officials finally allowed the flights to proceed but did not approve them for carrying troops or ammunition.¹⁷ The same base has been the site for anti-U.S. protests and occasional rough treatment of U.S. servicemen by Turkish soldiers. In 2004, the U.S. was looking at options for the rebasing of USAF aircraft currently located in Germany. Turkey was one country that offered an attractive forward location. However, Turkey was dropped from consideration due to perceived U.S.-Turkish political difficulties such a U.S. request would engender. As these examples show, the issue of unmolested PKK presence in Iraq has placed a cloud over the U.S.-Turkish military to military relationship.

U.S. Short and Long-Term Security Interests with Turkey

President Bush's vision for U.S. foreign policy has four general elements. The first element entails the U.S. working with the G-8 and allies to spark the kind of reform in the broader Middle East and North Africa that focuses on economic development, political reform and reconciliation. Reform in the Middle East should stress the mitigation of impediments to the above. Second, the U.S. seeks a viable, worldwide coalition against terrorism that places special emphasis on denying terrorists access to weapons of mass destruction. The third broad U.S. foreign policy goal is to strengthen the trans-Atlantic relationship. As the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, Daniel Fried, noted in a July 2005 address, this trans-Atlantic relationship should have as its objective the preservation of peace, security and democracy around the world. The fourth policy goal for the U.S. is to promote open markets and free trade.¹⁸

In many respects, a positive working relationship with Turkey advances President Bush's foreign policy vision. In the same July 2005 address, Assistant Secretary Fried pointed out that the U.S. supports Turkey's inclusion into the EU as a means to make Turkey a stronger partner for the U.S.¹⁹ Turkey also has a key role to play in strengthening the trans-Atlantic link by virtue of its leading role in NATO. Turkey's leadership of the International Security Assistance Force

(ISAF) II and VII, its NATO Center of Excellence-Defense Against Terrorism, and the contribution of its 3rd Corps as a High Readiness Force has solidified Turkey's place in the new NATO structure. The U.S. has supported Turkey's efforts to bring peace to its neighborhood, be it with Greek airspace issues, compromises on a Cyprus peace plan, peacekeeping support in the Balkans, or combined efforts for political and military reform in Georgia. The U.S. also recognizes the role Turkey can play in the Middle East and North Africa by Turkey's co-sponsorship of the Democracy Assistance Dialogue. Turkey's history of balancing political democracy with a strong Islamic identity is viewed by the U.S. as instructive for other states in the region. U.S. and Turkish security goals converge with regards to Iraq. Both states want a democratic, pluralistic and united Iraq.²⁰ Turkey's meeting with Sunni leader Tariq al-Hashemi in the run-up to the December 2005 Iraqi Parliamentary elections and earlier meetings with Iraqi Kurdish leaders Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani have helped shape the Iraqi political landscape in a fashion favorable to U.S. interests. The U.S. supports Turkey's vision of itself as a crossroads for energy products. Finally, the U.S. supports Turkish anti-terrorism efforts such as Turkish participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative and the creation of a NATO Center of Excellence-Defense Against Terrorism in Ankara.

Several security-related unknowns are looming on the horizon about which Turkey will play an integral role. The first issue is the potential regional water shortage complications related to global warming and irrigation/dam construction in Turkey's southeast. There remain uncertainties about the extent and causes of global warming, but there is strong agreement that the phenomenon is occurring and will be extant for many years to come. The United Kingdom's Meteorological Office's Hadley Center for Climate Prediction and Research predicts mean temperatures in Turkey and countries to its immediate south will rise 3–5 degrees centigrade by 2070 with incremental increases up until that date.²¹ More immediate is Turkey's massive public works project of 21 dams and supported irrigation systems as part of the Southeast Anatolia Project, known by its Turkish initials as GAP. The GAP is Turkey's most ambitious development project ever and aims to provide electricity, jobs, and irrigation to Turkey's impoverished southeast. Turkey also sees the GAP as a means to give productive alternatives to Kurdish minorities in the southeast after 20 years of fighting the Turkish Kurd members of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The project is not without costs. According to the World Commission on Dams, a project such as the GAP could lead to loss of downstream fisheries, wetlands, and degraded water quality.²² In 1989, tension between Turkey and Syria and Iraq increased as Turkey cut water flow rates in the Euphrates river in order to fill the Ataturk Dam. In 1998, Turkey cut the flow of water to Syria in response to Syrian support to the PKK.²³ A water crisis

threatens Turkey and its adjacent area. Future global warming will generate questions as to where the variations will occur and what the effects will be. What will be the implications and consequences for resource availability, living standards, and security? Turkey, with its control of the headwaters flowing into Iraq and Syria, may have to face some difficult choices in the coming decades. In fact, these challenges are manifest today. In May 2004, Iraq's Minister for Water Resources, Dr. Abdul Latif Rashid, complained about water shortages due to Syrian and Turkish water projects upriver. In the future such complaints will increase due to an growing population in the Middle East, higher temperatures in Turkey's mountains that feed the Tigris and Euphrates, and expanded water needs in Iraq and Syria. Turkey could be the fulcrum for resolving or exacerbating an acute, future security problem.

There are ongoing questions about the growth and direction of Islam in Turkey. Turkish citizens have traditionally practiced a private, predominantly Sunni, confession while the State stoutly supported secularism. This tradition is changing. Prime Minister Erdogan's recent efforts to allow women to wear headscarves at government functions and the opening of state colleges to students from the state-controlled religious schools is altering the future of Turkey's institutionalized secularism. Other expressions of growing political Islam in Turkey include the 14 October 2005 arrest of the rector of Yuzunçu Yil University (YYU), Dr. Yuçel Askin. He is well known for putting an end to Islamic extremism at YYU after he took over the university. Turkish press contends that the Erdogan Government had Dr. Askin put in prison in order to assuage Erdogan's Islamic political base. He was reportedly apprehended for forgery and corruption tied to the 1998 purchase of medical equipment for the university. He has been held in prison and his trial began in December 2005. Recent bans on alcohol in certain AKP-controlled towns and a new policy by the Ministry of Health requiring hospital employees to state their religious affiliation have increased concern about the rise of conservative Islam in Turkey.²⁴ If this is not enough to stir one's interest, there are the Islamic websites that include Turkey as part of a future Caliphate. To be sure, Turkey is in the midst of its greatest socio-political change since 1924 when Mustafa Kemal put the country on the road to secularism, but it remains unclear how defined the Islamic contours of Turkey's future political landscape will be. John Esposito notes that Turkey's recent political history includes strong Islamist trends, including the "Followers of Light" in the 1950s who supported an Islamic state based upon the Sharia and the National Salvation Party in the 1970s that wanted a return to Turkey's Islamic heritage.²⁵ On the other hand, there is also a moderate view of Islam within the Turkish people. According to Andrew Mango, because of state influence over religion since 1924, one can see a religious humanism developing as an alternative to the secular humanism of the educated

Turkish elite.²⁶ This form of Islam would not be embraced by those, like Osama bin Laden, who take a more literal interpretation of the Koran. There are other interpretations of Islam in Turkey as well, such as the Fethullahci, Bektashi, and Alevi brotherhoods, all of which embrace a Sufi tradition. A survey of religious observance in Turkey, conducted in 1999, found that only 10% of the population supports Sharia law.²⁷ U.S. policies need to be sensitive to the dynamic nature of religion in Turkish society so that U.S. officials do not find themselves in the middle of an internal cultural and political battle.

Another security unknown with regional security implications is how Kurdish nationalism will develop in the next decade. Underscoring the importance of this issue, Turkish, Syrian, and Iranian officials met last year to discuss the future of Kurdistan. Their concern is well justified. Kurdish nationalism is a potential powder keg that, if ignited, could lead to unrest from Armenia to Europe. The variables affecting the direction and strength of Kurdish nationalism are numerous and, themselves, complicated. To name a few, they include, Turkey's relationship with its indigenous Kurdish population, Turkey's relationship with Iraqi Kurds, inter-Kurdish politics, the effect of EU-membership criteria on Turkey's domestic policies, the influence of PKK hardliners and their commitment to use force in eastern Turkey, the development of democracy in Iraq, and Syrian and Iranian minority policies. Resolving the Kurdish issue in Turkey is what H.J. Rittel would describe as a "wicked problem." Solving a wicked problem has consequences, some of which are unforeseeable or adverse and each attempt at creating a solution changes the understanding of the problem.²⁸ It is outside the scope of this paper to describe a solution to Kurdish nationalism. However, in this uncertain future one point is clear. On the foggy path of the Kurdish peoples' future, much of that way will be trod with Turkey. It is in America's long-term interest to dampen the violent, separatist components of Kurdish nationalism and preserve a strong relationship with Turkey.

The previous section has addressed many of the reasons for the U.S. to develop an enduring relationship with Turkey. Many of these reasons are a reflection of the new reality that Syria and Iraq are of growing interest to the United States. In the past, it was easier to support Turkey when it had differences with its southern neighbors. As Iraq and Syria grow in importance to the United States, Turkish policies vis-à-vis these countries will become of greater concern to U.S. policy makers. In this respect, the U.S. would benefit by reducing the points of friction between Turkey and its neighbors.

Moving Forward With Turkey

Assistant Secretary Fried made clear that the U.S. is building its relationship with Turkey along several axes – political, economic, and security. Given the heavy focus on military cooperation that characterized the former relationship, it is not at all unhealthy to see the U.S.-Turkish relationship diversify. However, there is also room for improving the military-to-military relationship. The U.S. military and its Turkish counterpart have much more that they could be doing together to counter global extremism and its supporting networks. This starts with reinforcing Turkey's role as a regional leader. The U.S. might consider greater cooperation with Turkish security initiatives on the Black Sea. Turkish Special Forces, a very capable force, could assist the U.S. in developing counter-terrorism capacity in the Armed Forces of several East European and Caucasian countries. Turkey's Center of Excellence and its Partnership for Peace (PfP) training center are ideal venues for inclusion of Armenian forces in a series of confidence building measures. The Turkish military also has a significant number of forces and capabilities that may be useful in support of U.S. goals in the Horn of Africa.

To strengthen the relationship with Turkey, the U.S. could use a number of political, economic, public diplomacy, and military initiatives. Many of these are ongoing. For instance, the U.S. is the third largest contributor of Foreign Direct Investment to Turkey.²⁹ Turkey is the largest recipient of International Military Education and Training funding. While efforts such as these are important, they do not seem to be putting the U.S. relationship with Turkey back on a firm footing. This is because Turkey remains focused on its number one security concern, the threat from the PKK. As the most important impediment to the U.S.-Turkish relationship, this issue requires a deeper examination. Since 2004, senior U.S. officials have repeatedly told Turkish counterparts that Iraq would not remain a haven for terrorists, including the PKK. However, as Assistant Secretary Fried noted in July 2005, "security conditions in Iraq preclude major military operations against the PKK at this time."³⁰ This message was repeated by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy, Peter Flory, on 11 November 2005.³¹

Turkish officials understand the U.S. military has limited resources in Iraq and must first focus on solving the unrest generated by former Baath'ists, Sunni rejectionists and foreign extremists.³² U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) officials have argued that Turkish calls for limited military action against the PKK camps in northern Iraq have the potential of causing unrest in the stable northern provinces of Iraq. Such action against the PKK also represents an unnecessary complication to the Iraqi political process at a critical time in the country's political development. However, in 2006, if all goes well in Iraq, the growth of competent Iraqi security

forces and the solidification of the Iraqi Government will reinvigorate Turkish calls for U.S. and Iraqi action against the PKK in northern Iraq.

In 2006, the promises and prestige of the U.S. government's Executive Branch may well be on the line. As U.S. troops start to withdraw from Iraq, it will be increasingly difficult to continue the claim that the United States does not have the forces for even limited military action against the PKK. This is one reason to move against the PKK in Iraq. There are several others. Iran is taking some military action against the PKK.³³ Given the U.S. foreign policy objective of strengthening the trans-Atlantic link, the U.S. might wish to avoid a situation where Turkey sees greater cooperation from Iran than the U.S. on Turkey's number one security concern. The U.S. must also be sensitive to the possibility that growing PKK activity in Turkey since June 2004 will have a backlash in the form of anti-Americanism.³⁴ Finally, to not support Turkey's request to assist in the fight against "their" terrorist threat, the U.S. weakens its own call for a coalition against terrorists.

What can the United States do to aid Turkey in its fight against the PKK? There is much already being done and more to do. The US can work with Turkey and Iraq to close PKK front offices in Iraq. The US is contributing to this effort by training the Iraqi police that would be used in such an effort. Turkey would like to see the United States use its own forces to close those PKK front offices, but this will likely remain an issue for Turkish and Iraqi officials. Iraqi officials have taken preliminary steps by declaring the PKK a terrorist organization. Positive action beyond that declaration remains to be carried out.

The U.S. can target the supporting networks for the PKK, such as its financing and radio stations. On several occasions in Fall 2005, the U.S. Charge d'Affaires in Turkey, Nancy McElDowney, noted U.S. efforts to cut the flow of funds from Europe to the PKK.³⁵ Getting at the PKK financing in Europe is a difficult proposition given the sensitive nature of the information involved. This is, again, an area where Turkish officials might take the lead with their European counterparts. U.S. officials are reportedly urging the Danish Government to restrict the broadcast licenses of several radio stations in Denmark because of the stations' connections to, and support of, the PKK.³⁶

Bill Park has argued that there is room for a possible Turkish-Kurdish "understanding" in northern Iraq. He points to the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) offices in Ankara, the levels of Kurdish/Turkish economic cooperation since March 2003, and visits of PUK and KDP leadership to Ankara as evidence of a possible relationship.³⁷ The Turkish Prime Minister's foreign policy advisor, Ahmet Davutoglu, noted in November 2005 that Turkish officials told KDP leader Barzani that if the 15 December 2005 elections are held fairly

and the Sunnis are given representation in Parliament, Turkey would support “mutual dependence” with cross-border economies.³⁸ In late October 2005, a Turkish National Intelligence Agency undersecretary met with Barzani. The talks reportedly included discussions about the PKK.³⁹ This suggests the possibility that Turkish and Kurdish officials could be discussing options against the PKK. To the degree that those discussions may have a security component to them, the U.S. should seek ways to assist. This assistance could involve information exchanges between U.S., Turkish and Kurdish officials to assist effective action against the PKK. It could involve greater cooperation on the Iraqi/Turkish border security and other measures designed to isolate, weaken and curtail the free movement of the PKK in Iraq. If the U.S., Turkey, and Iraq are going to move in that direction, now is the time to begin planning. Now is the time to discuss with Turkey the centers of gravity that support the PKK and options to reduce the effectiveness of the PKK in Iraq. If security and political conditions in Iraq progress in 2006 to the point where US forces can draw down, the U.S. should be ready to support Iraqi security operations against the PKK. Getting this effort started is important because it will be very hard to convince the Iraqi Kurds to limit support for the PKK.

The US should not soften its position against unilateral Turkish military incursions into Iraq. Incursions would set a bad precedent for other countries, like Iran, to follow. Furthermore, in practical terms, Turkish forces are not likely to be effective against the PKK in the Northern Iraqi mountains for the same reasons that the PKK was able to escape destruction in the mid-1990s.

The U.S. should also support a real, substantive Turkish amnesty for PKK members who are not members of the organization's senior leadership. Turkey offered the PKK a partial and conditional amnesty in 2003 that only covered PKK members who had not committed any acts of violence. The offer was not well-received by the PKK and only a handful of its lower members accepted the offer. For most PKK members, the alternative to integration in Turkish society is separatism. The Balkans aptly demonstrated the dangers of exclusionary internal ethnic policies. Such a scenario in southeastern Turkey or in northern Iraq runs counter to U.S. interests.

Finally, the U.S. can help Turkey reduce the effectiveness of PKK attacks in Turkey. Some of this has been occurring. Turkish liaison officers with Multinational Forces in Iraq are in a position to learn the same lessons the U.S. forces are learning while combating ambushes and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Iraq. The U.S. is also using other channels to provide Turkey with information to defeat IEDs. One of these channels is the Turkish Center of Excellence Defense-Against Terrorism. These efforts need to be sustained. Additionally, since

11 September 2001, private industry has made significant improvements in ground sensors. These devices may prove useful for Turkey in attempting to reduce the number of PKK fighters traveling across its borders with Iran and Iraq.

In conclusion, in the last fifteen years Turkey and the U.S. have had to chart a new defense relationship to replace their Cold War understanding. Most see Operation IRAQI FREEDOM as complicating that effort. Perhaps that was true early in the war, but it is more useful to see the war as an opportunity to develop a more complex and enduring relationship between the U.S. and Turkey. 2006 is the year when both countries can make the most of this opportunity.

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